

# Goodbye

It has sometimes been difficult to find a title for an editorial but, on this occasion, one word says it all: goodbye. It is a word that can be said in many different ways. There is the cheery 'bye' that says 'I look forward to seeing you again'; there is the door-slamming goodbye with each syllable barked; and there is the heavy-hearted goodbye, which is said slowly and brings to mind the image of friends separating and forlorn faces mouthing the word at the window of a departing train. It is in this last way that I am saying it with this editorial: I am leaving *EMBO reports* and saying goodbye to both the readers and its fantastic team of current and former editors.

The job of Senior Editor at any journal is an interesting one; it offers the pleasure of reading the latest original research and up-to-date reviews, and affords the opportunity to shape and guide a journal. The job of Senior Editor at *EMBO reports* has been even more rewarding as, thanks mainly to the professionalism and hard work of the editorial teams over the past eight years, the journal has become highly successful. Indeed, our internal analysis of papers that we have rejected has shown that the vast majority of decisions made on these manuscripts are the correct ones—papers we reject, on the whole, do not do well once they are published elsewhere—which is gratifying feedback for all involved.

Yet, *EMBO reports* has not only garnered a reputation for reporting good science, but also paved the way with a novel Science & Society section. It has been a joy to help mould this section into something that our readers appreciate. A related major task—and a great pleasure—has been writing monthly editorials. When I had finished the first editorial, I experienced a moment of panic as I was faced with the challenge of finding a topic for the next month and beyond. More than one hundred editorials later, that concern has long gone. There are so many topics to write about that are

relevant to scientists and that are not often addressed in other journals. Some of my favourites include language barriers for non-English speaking scientists (March, 2008), *The downsides of mobility* (March, 2007), the fate of scientists who reach retirement age (March, 2004), bullying (October, 2008), *Family matters* (November, 2005), and role models and mentors (December, 2006). Then there are all of the societal topics that address how science is catering to, and is directed by, politics and business, such as the 'Faustian' bargain of private interests and university research (March, 2003), or the role of government in directing science (December, 2003). My editorial, *An NIH/NSF for Europe* (June, 2002), was one of the first serious calls for a European Research Council, which has now become a reality. And, of course, it is always fun to take a sidelong look at the scientific community and comment on how we behave. My favourites on this theme are *Conformists* (October, 2007) and *Meeting standards* (January, 2006). It was similarly amusing to write a tongue-in-cheek rejection letter to Charles Darwin (January, 2009) while a crowded world of communication was eulogizing him for his two-hundredth birthday.

There are so many more topics that deserve comment and attention on the editorial pages of *EMBO reports*. For example, I think that it is time to re-examine the tradition of scientific meetings in an era of online discussions and virtual spaces. Synthetic biology is attracting increasing interest. There is also a debate to be had about the relative merits of pure research institutes versus research universities. The use of power is another topic that deserves analysis, as it crosses policy and research barriers. Looking back, I have come to the conclusion that, in addition to being able to reach out to the scientific community, writing editorials has been a very useful exercise to sort out my thoughts on various topics. It has forced me on many occasions to research and form an

opinion on several issues that I have been able to rely upon in many different contexts.

I am extremely pleased that Howy Jacobs has agreed to become the new Senior Editor of *EMBO reports*. I have known Howy for many years, both as a great scientist and communicator, and I have had many thought-provoking and enjoyable discussions with him. I have no doubt that the journal is in good hands for the years to come. I am certain that with Howy's guidance, *EMBO reports* will increase even further in value and stature as an important source of information for the scientific community—and our broader readership—communicating both insightful scientific research, and commenting on and reporting the ongoing debates about how science and society shape one other in the twenty-first century.

Now, however, the word limit is reached and the 'pen' must finally stop. The train whistle blows, and it is time to move to the window and say a last goodbye!



**Frank Gannon**

*This Editorial represents the personal views of Frank Gannon and not those of Science Foundation Ireland or the European Molecular Biology Organization.*

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